



Solidarity Ukraine – 01/06/2023- issue 16 – a perfect culprit

IN THIS ISSUE

the ambiguous factory of the culprit

Russian legend

Ukrainian answer

Counter-legend

Useful contacts

The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) is associated to the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on 24th February 2022. After a pandemic that has weakened democratic countries with the disturbing rise of conspiracy theories and hate speech on social networks, we do hope this war in Europe will be an opportunity to reflect on a new solidarity, among European and international allies. This issue is the sixth for 2023 and the 16th since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. In this issue we discuss how to create an ideal culprit from the figure of Stepan Bandera, who has been exploited since the beginning of the conflict by Russia to justify its hostility and brutality towards Ukraine. It is easy enough to create a legend, a bad reputation, to explain the reasons for an offensive and partisan strategy against a

designated adversary. In judicial terms, it looks like the case is being heard by the prosecution. A cabal feeds itself, it is enough to identify negative elements that are often true but are not balanced by other positive elements that would have neutralized them. One way to rob a “colleague” is to send apparently neutral and friendly emissaries whose profiles do not match, each remaining in one’s character and prior ideas. The «Queen without kingdom» Marie Stuart, opposed to Queen Elisabeth in the 16th century, is finally trapped by a spy sent by Elisabeth whom she had identified with foresight «*Beware of Walsingham because he is a cunning man who hides his true intentions under the pretext of a (false) friendship*» she writes to the ambassador of France (1). The Ukrainian President has not fallen into any trap set by an equally devious Russia.

- 1- The ambiguous factory of the culprit
- 2- Russian legend, weaponizing a trouble figure
- 3- Ukrainian answer, struggling against revisionism
- 4- Counter legend

* the logo was designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

The ambiguous factory of the culprit

In Alan J. Pakula's film "Presumed Innocent" (1990) the hero played by Harrison Ford is the victim of a contrived machination by his wife who retaliates for the affront she suffered (she was betrayed) by killing the object of her resentment (the mistress) and by accusing a false culprit (her husband). A desperate scorched earth strategy without any winner. Her husband was indeed "guilty" but adultery was his only "crime".

Cabals have always existed against prominent personalities. More anonymously, in the professional world, employees have been harassed by shady colleagues or a hierarchy wishing to get rid of them. The example of France Telecom illustrated tragically in the early 2000s in France a system aimed at breaking down employees (often executives) whose management had decided to eliminate the missions, making them useless and placardized. The calculation of this curious human resources strategy was to make executives who had become cumbersome leave "voluntarily the payroll". The human damage (suicides, depressions, etc.) was finally recognized by the justice and the leaders of France Telecom personally questioned. But how many situations go unpunished?

Each case is unique, and some situations can be ambiguous. It can be a series of blunders. For example, junior employees can be sent to a "senior colleague". They are gifted but their casual attitude ends up raising questions about the profile and information they received about a colleague they are supposed to support. Senior emissaries, assuming the role of «old sages» can also present themselves as allies but confirm a very mixed feeling and end up being unfriendly by returning an equally caricatural profile. A last case of fig is given by «colleagues» who have a recognized qualification and experience in their field. The collaboration started in a positive spirit quickly takes a more «friendly» turn. Everyone tries to play one's part, but it is forced when "colleagues" who have suddenly become "friends" do not share the same interests and do not live the same way. A gap is created, and a mutual misunderstanding is established. Everyone tries to play the role assigned to each other, but it is unnatural. To the first snags, in the exercise of a common mission, each one returns the wrongs. There is nevertheless a definite imbalance in information, too many "unspoken" elements on one side.

Clumsiness exists in friendly, social or professional relationships. Their repetition ends up questioning the intention- what was the purpose of the strategy? The profile of the emissaries, and their attitude, is always out of step with a "target" who feels that she/he has the wrong role, reacts violently, and ends up playing the caricature sent back to her/him. The strategy was singularly lacking in nuance, but the "target" did not show much foresight either by reacting so violently. The message could be entirely relevant and justified, but the manner in which it was conveyed, and the emissaries chosen to do so were not suitable for a profile that was doubtless difficult. Who is then guilty for the successive failures?

.Russian legend – weaponizing a trouble figure

The Russian strategy towards Ukraine, on the other hand, is unambiguous. It can certainly be analysed as an example of harassment, on a large scale, and for a long time, against a country that Russia has decided to annex, and to which there remained only one alternative: submit or disappear. Vladimir Putin's speech before the Russian aggression of 24 February 2023 refers to a desire to "de-nazify" Ukraine, under the influence of nationalist troops thirsting for hatred and revenge against Russia, which had no choice but to defend itself by attacking. The Russian president reiterated his accusations in his speech on May 9, 2023, suggesting a revised version of the Second World War, the USSR presented as the main (if not only) winner of the conflict.

The figure of Stepan Bandera was instrumentalized by the Russian power. Ukrainian nationalist leader born in Galicia in 1920, he collaborated with Nazi Germany during the 1940s (3). He has been mentioned more than twenty times by the Russian foreign ministry. Sergei Lavrov, the head of Russian diplomacy, quoted him again in a speech on 10th of February 2023, claiming that the authorities in Kiev are his "successors". Stepan Bandera joined the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in the late 1920s, a radical movement for the liberation of Ukraine from the Polish and Russian occupiers whose fascist ideology is inspired by Dmytro Dontsov, translator of *Mein Kampf* in Ukrainian (4). His most controversial decision was to collaborate with Nazi Germany, whom he had seen as a potential ally at the beginning of the war: "In the countries occupied by the USSR, before the latter committed the terrible abuses that we know, many believed that Hitler could be a liberator" against the Soviet occupier. But "when World War II broke out, Ukrainian nationalists quickly disillusioned" and realized their mistake (4)

Stepan Bandera was anti-Semitic. He was influenced by German propaganda and the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism that Jews are the minions of communism". (5) In the Lviv region, "the population massacred thousands of Jewish civilians, believing that they were complicit in the executions of Ukrainian nationalists committed by the NKVD [Soviet political police] before the withdrawal of Russian troops. Bandera's supporters are at work in this massacre of the Jews". From his arrest by the Germans in mid-July 1941, it cannot be said that Bandera was personally responsible for the massacres against the Jews during the aftermath of the conflict" (6). In 2010, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko awarded him the title of "hero of Ukraine". Initially confined to the far right, the figure of Stepan Bandera was taken over in 2014, during the Maidan Revolution, by pro-European Ukrainians who opposed their pro-Russian- "Groups like the Right Sector [an ultranationalist Ukrainian party] were also very active from an activist point of view during these demonstrations." (7).

Ukraine is certainly not free from any criticism like all other European countries during World War II (8) but since the Maidan Revolution (2014) and especially since the election of Volodymyr Zelenski (2019) things have changed.

Ukrainian answer- struggling against revisionism

"President Zelensky has kept his distances from the figure of heroism of Stepan Bandera. For example, he dismissed Volodymyr Viatrovytch, the former director of the Institute of National Memory, responsible for the dissemination of the Bandera cult", (9).

If "many Jews are indeed dissatisfied" with the cult around Bandera, concedes Yaakov Dov Bleich, chief rabbi of Ukraine, the memory of the Holocaust is preserved in Ukraine. "Before the war, a program to rename the streets with the names of Ukrainian heroes and righteous people who saved Jews during the Holocaust was launched by the Jewish community in Ukraine. It was a great success,' he says. The massacre of Babi Yar, the largest massacre of the Ukrainian Shoah, is also commemorated "every year" by the government. (9) Yaakov Dov Bleich is adamant: "Putin is lying" when he says it is necessary to "de-nazify" Ukraine. "The Russian president is trying to rewrite history so that it fits with his mass-killing ideology. He uses the propaganda and lies those other murderous dictators used before him."

In a speech delivered by French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy at the Babi Yar Commemorations in Ukraine on September 29, 2016 (10), he recalled these tragic episodes of Ukrainian history: «*There is always a moment in the destiny of a great nation when the darkest pages of the book of the dead and the living come in the light of knowledge and remorse*». Ukraine, 75 years after the Babi Yar massacre, «*in this now cursed and sacred ravine of 34,000 men, women and children who were just guilty of being born, the time has come for contrition, repentance and the entry of crime into the great memorial of the universal conscience*».

Bernard-Henri Lévy recalls the repentance expressed by the French State (Jacques Chirac, 1995), the German State (Willy Brandt, 1970) or the Catholic Church (Pope John Paul II at Auschwitz-Bierkenau, 1979) for their responsibility in the Shoah. He associates Ukrainian President Poroshenko with this approach «*when he encourages his nation to remember the genocidal mass murder of the Holodomor, to celebrate the righteous among the Andrei Cheptitsky metropolitan nations, and to pay tribute to those Ukrainian Jews who were killed and buried without a grave, without trace and without being properly counted.*» Because on the «*path of justice and truth*», we «*know that nothing solid has ever been built by a country that has not accepted its own shadows and ghosts. And we understand the decent and fair recording of history was the real terrain on which the new Europe was built*».

Bernard-Henri Lévy concludes with this premonitory wish - that «*Ukrainians of so many different denominations (Jews, Christians, Muslims, non-believers)*» after having met the highest authorities of the new Ukraine and the States (Israel, Germany) who, together with Ukraine and now with the rest of the world, share «*the legacy of the dead of Babi Yar,*» confronted with «*a new stage in the era of totalitarianism and darkness,*» are preparing for «*a new step towards Europe.*»

Counter-legends

Built legends can be defeated by other more authentic, documented «stories», with reasoned explanations, in any case more nuanced. Designated “targets” did not understand the message being sent to them. Form prevented them from understanding the substance. They abused themselves, a mixture of naivety and vanity, but also lucidity about their character. It was not a matter of time but of false assumptions. By turning around, they actively contributed to a series of failures they did not want. In Charles Perrault’s tale "Bluebeard", the heroine waits in vain for a helping hand "*Anne, my sister Anne [don't you see anything coming?]*" (11). After 18 years, the Queen without kingdom Mary Stuart was murdered by her rival Elizabeth I of England who managed to trap her. In the reality or life of more anonymous “personalities”, situations are more ambiguous, and misunderstandings can accumulate.

Ukraine has only had to wait 8 years since the Maïdan Revolution (2014-2022). The terms of trade were flawed from the start between Russia and Ukraine. Wanting to impose “its” truth and its only point of view on Ukraine, which was ordered to do so, was a brutal and failed strategy. It was not a negotiation “among equals”. Ukraine is not obviously free of criticism, but it did not deserve such a bad treatment; it had begun to make its *mea culpa* to join Europe. Vladimir Putin with the help of his “hawks” will continue to feed “black legends”, the propaganda the Soviet Union had the secret of. One day they wore certain personalities to the pinnacle to finally devote them to moaning when they had become annoying. The great Stalinist trials left their mark. They had become case studies for political manipulation. In Putin’s Russia, even the figure of Joseph Stalin is no longer a foil (12), the anniversary of his death (1953-2023) gave rise to tributes. A bust of the «Father of peoples» was even inaugurated in Volgograd, ex-Stalingrad on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, before the arrival of President Vladimir Putin who commemorated the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad on Wednesday, March 1, 2023 (13).

Hope comes from Ukraine and President Zelenski. They know the past but prefer to look to the future, which is being built with the European Union, where the Ukrainian president made a series of visits in early May 2023 to rekindle the flame of his supporters: Italy, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. He met Pope Francis on May 6 in the Vatican (Rome), but without succeeding in inflecting an incomprehensible «pacifism».

Nothing is ever done for ever. Volodymir Zelenski is a pragmatic leader. He has learned a lot over the last four years, and he keeps on learning. He also knows that yesterday’s enemies can become tomorrow’s allies if negotiations are frank and more direct. Boris Vian wrote, “*People don't change, things change*” (13). This is true for all the protagonists, even if in fact perceptions are changing over time.

Boris Vian wrote, “*People don't change, things change*” (14). Who knows: a change of power can always work in his favour. “*Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra*” (15)

- (1) Florence Rosier « Une cinquantaine de lettres de Marie Stuart retrouvées et déchiffrées », Le Monde, 10th of February 2023
- (2) Alan J. Pakula « Presumed innocent », USA, 1990
- (3) Quang Pham « Guerre en Ukraine : quatre questions sur Stepan Bandera, figure historique présentée par la propagande russe comme le symbole de la "nazification" du pays », France Télévisions broadcasted on 02/03/2023 - [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/europe/manifestations-en-ukraine/guerre-en-ukraine-quatre-questions-sur-stepan-bandera-figure-historique-presentee-par-la-propagande-russe-comme-le-symbole-de-la-nazification-du-pays_5683016.html#xtor=EPR-555-\[newsletterquotidienne\]-20230302&pid=726375-1459331622-9a5a1656](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/europe/manifestations-en-ukraine/guerre-en-ukraine-quatre-questions-sur-stepan-bandera-figure-historique-presentee-par-la-propagande-russe-comme-le-symbole-de-la-nazification-du-pays_5683016.html#xtor=EPR-555-[newsletterquotidienne]-20230302&pid=726375-1459331622-9a5a1656)
- (4) Eric Aunoble, Historian specialising in 'Ukraine at hte University of Geneva quoted by Quang Pham, France télévision, 2 mars 2023 (note 2)
- (5) Galia Ackerman, Historian specialising in Russia quoted by Quang Pham, France télévision, 2 mars 2023 (note 2)
- (6) Eric Aunoble, Historian specialising in 'Ukraine at hte University of Geneva quoted by Quang Pham, France télévision, 2 mars 2023 (note 2)
- (7) Delphine Bechtel, assitant professor at he University Sorbonne quoted by Quang Pham, France télévision, 2 mars 2023 (note 2)
- (8) except for Denmark whose attitude was exemplary in saving the entire Danish Jewish community or the United Kingdom which resisted valiantly the Blitz Krieg launched by the Nazi regime Yaakov Dov Bleich, grand rabbin d'Ukraine cité par Quang Pham, France télévision, 2 mars 2023 (note 2)
- (9) Yaakov Dov Bleich, Chief Rabbi of Ukraine quoted by Quang Pham, France télévision, 2 March 2023
- (10) Bernard Henri Levy speech delivered for the Memorial of Babi Yar, en Ukraine, 29th of September 2016 - <https://laregledujeu.org/2016/09/30/29899/discours-a-babi-yar/>
- (11) Charles Perrault « Barbe bleue », Paris, 1697.
- (12) In a series of 3 documentaries directed by Jennifer Deschamps «Putin's Poisons» (2023) broadcast by Arte on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, we learn that Vladimir Putin restored the Stalinist anthem from his first election as President of the Russian Federation
- (13) BFM TV 2 mars 2023 - https://www.bfmtv.com/international/asia/russie/russie-une-statue-de-staline-inauguree-dans-la-ville-de-volgograd-ex-stalingrad_VN-202302020382.html
- (14) Boris Vian (1947) « L'écume des jours », Paris : collection 10/18 (1960)
- (15) “Do what you must, what will be will be”, old French saying coming from Latin « alea jacta est » meaning « the dice are thrown ». In ancient times, this expression testified to a certain fatality: we rely on the Gods to protect us from the consequences-
<https://www.edilivre.com/adviene-que-pourra/> consulté le 03/03/2023

L'Aide médicale et caritative France-Ukraine - envoi de convois d'aide humanitaire, des soins aux blessés, des échanges de savoir-faire médical, une aide psychologique et organise des colonies de vacances pour les enfants orphelins - HelloAsso - <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/aide%20medicale%20caritative%20france%20ukraine/collectes/aider-ukraine-amurgence-help-ukraine/don>

Le Comité d'aide médicale Ukraine - réfugiés en transit dans l'ouest du pays, et collecte fonds, médicaments et équipements pour l'hébergement et les soins via ses partenaires français, l'association SAFE et l'organisation FONDEMOS. - <http://www.cam-z.org/en/news/121/>

JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine. - <https://www.jeveuxaider.gouv.fr/engagement/benevolat-ukraine/>

Les Banques alimentaires - une aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine, dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés - <https://www.banquealimentaire.org/urgence-ukraine>

La Protection Civile et l'Association des maires de France ont établi une [liste](#) (lits de camps, sacs de couchage, lingettes, conserves, pansements hémostatiques, solutions antiseptiques ...).

L'Association des maires de France a dressé les [lieux de collecte](#) à travers toute la France. Les Maires de France appellent à la [solidarité avec l'Ukraine](#). De nombreuses villes de France organisent des collectes de produits de première nécessité - <https://www.amf.asso.fr/documents-les-maires-france-appellent-la-solidarite-avec-lukraine/41122>

La plateforme officielle « *Je m'engage pour l'Ukraine* » lancée le 8 mars 2022 par le gouvernement pour accompagner les Français souhaitant héberger chez eux des Ukrainiens réfugiés et accueillis en France. - <https://parrainage.refugies.info/>

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement. - <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine>

Bibliothèque sans frontière (BSF) - Depuis le début de l'offensive russe en Ukraine, BSF se mobilise et déploie, partout en Europe, des solutions d'urgence pour l'accueil et l'intégration des populations réfugiées. « Bonjour France » est une application pour smartphone innovante et totalement gratuite, qui propose un apprentissage accéléré du français depuis l'ukrainien, disponible depuis le 19 octobre 2022.

<https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2022/10/14/bsf-lance-bonjour-france-une-application-innovante-dapprentissage-du-francais-pour-les-refugies-ukrainiens/>

La mission catholique de l'Eglise polonaise en France suggère également le lien suivant : <https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/> - **Source** : conférence des évêques de France